

Kirk Pearce Missouri Route 66

Transcribed by Jennifer Sawayda, 1/6/09

TAPE NUMBER: XLII Side A (12/31/08)

Remembering Route 66--Driving down Route 66 with bread salesman father--Recalling Names of Places--Wrink's Market--Blue Moon Camp--Riley's--Harber's--Eden Resort--Hazelgreen--Gascozark--Satellite Café run by Alloways--Space Station--Vesta Court--Poraca Court--showing pictures of old places--Munger Moss Motel--Skyline--eating best barbecue--Joy Motel--Lebanon--Lenz Homotel--old bridge--Camp Joy--Lawson filling station--Dairy Queen--discrimination in restaurant--Chevy Garage--Alamo Club--old jail still there--Lebanon versus Waynesville--manufacturing plants--furniture and whiskey barrels--aunt working at bus station--roasted chicken--tourists versus travelers--Streetcar Grille--tame rabbit--5th Jefferson Bridge--Detroit Tool Engineering--Caldwells truck stop--Dream Village with fountain--Horseshoe Pond--crossroads for highways--opposition to highways--Butterfield Stagecoach--Trail of Tears--African-Americans on Route 66--black families in Lebanon--Kavales--W.T. Vernon School--Ms. Ford--Phillipsburg

TAPE NUMBER: XLII Side B (1/6/09)

Phillipsburg--old sandstone church--Midway Café--Conway--Little Round Pie--obtaining old photos--No Hispanics--Fort Leonard Wood--Saturdays in town--Hays shoe store--visiting on the streets--revival of interest in Route 66 in '90s--disappearance of stores with coming of the highway--old-timers returning to Route 66--Route 66 Festival--murals painted by high school kids--Red Fox--Silent Night Camp--old Dairy Queen--rural school called Twilight with eight grades--Route 66 Museum--donated items for museum--Ramona Lehman--changes in Lebanon over the years--farming and manufacturing industries--no more milking industry--Copeland--closure of HD Lee plant--disappearance of downtown stores--old books for archives--preserving materials for generations to come

Side A

David Dunaway Start by telling me your name and where you grew up.

Kirk Pearce Well, my name is Kirk Pearce, I'm 54, and I've lived all my life in Laclede County. And I remember Route 66 before it was I-44. And my grandparents lived in Conway Missouri – you know where that is at – so we went up there on the old highway many times. Also, my dad was a bread salesman, and he delivered bread on the old route, all those stops. So I have all these memories of those little stores and places like that when I was growing up.

DD Maybe this would be in the '50's?

KP Yes.

DD Maybe you could give us some idea of – So he delivered bread along 66?

KP Yeah.

DD What would that be like, if you would go out with your dad on a bread run? Can you remember the names of places? Give us a sense for what it would be like to have a stop, and also if you remember any particular places along your route. It's probably worth remembering those as well.

KP Yeah, I remember first going toward St. Louis—the first place he stopped at is Rink's Market—that's one of the landmarks still here today.

DD R-I-N-K?

KP W-R-I-N-K-'s. It's still in business, they opened up again. And when we went down Route 66, the next place was called Blue Moon Camp. And that was a very popular place at one time. And this lady would buy one box of bread once a week. We'd be there at 4 o'clock Well, she would get up, we'd ring the bell there, and she'd get up and we delivered the bread. I always thought that was something.

DD What kind of a place was it?

KP It was a little tourist camp—just a few rooms there.

DD What'd it look like?

KP Well, it was blue and just very crude.

DD Cabins?

KP Yeah. A few little cabins out there in the back. She was in the main office.

DD And this would be for people traveling across the country who needed a place to stop--

KP Yes, yes.

DD --the old tourist camps.

KP The next place was Riley's, and it was a little rock building and it was starting to run down at that time—you could kind of imagine that, anyway. Then there was a place called Harbers —The Harbers. They're up there on the Stoutland exit.

DD Stoa?

KP Stoutland. Stoutland, Missouri, at the exit right there, T-Highway. That was kind of a busy place too.

DD And what was that like? It was a crossroads?

KP Yes, one of them. The Stoutland exit to I-44 was on the other side, OK?

DD So already there was a highway running parallel to 66?

KP Yes, yeah.

DD Was it local traffic that was on 66 and through traffic on the freeway?

KP Yes. The eastbound was the old highway for a long time, you know

what I mean?

DD What kind of store was it?

KP Stoutland was just a little town, you know. When you went on and you passed the Gasconade River Bridge, and right there was Eden Resort—now I remember that—people would still stay at the Eden Resort, right there on the hill.

DD Is there still there?

KP No, it's gone now. It seems like all those places are gone since we went up through there. I still remember just like it was yesterday.

DD What did that place look like?

KP It was brown, the buildings were painted brown. It was up on a hill, overlooking the Gasconade River.

DD On the left or right side as you went down 66?

KP On the right hand side. [In eastbound lane.]

DD Are the buildings still there?

KP No, they're all gone. They're all gone. It seems to me that those places are just, you know, deteriorating. And then when you cross the bridge there, you go to Hazelgreen, which used to be a real lively little place. But you wouldn't even know anything was there. There's an old church house right on the road.

DD And when you say lively place, what kind of stores were there?

KP Well, there used to be a bank there at one time and there were like two or three resorts there. Then there was a real active store and a post office. It was the Hazelgreen store and post office.

DD And how did people around 66 in this part of Missouri earn their living?

KP Well, most of them were farmers in that area. And this lady by the name of Mrs. Walker, she had the resort. And a lot of the people—a lot of the ladies in the community worked for the Walkers and did—there was fishing guide trips and all that kind of stuff down

there. So I guess people snatched their money.

DD So before that, was it lumbering around here?

KP Well, people did timber, you know what I mean? Logging and all that kind of stuff. But most of them were farmers.

DD Right. So let's keep going on your journey past the river there at Hazelgreen.

KP Hazelgreen, that's a lovely camp. And you entered into Pulaski County then. And there was a place called Gascozark. And the old store's still there, but it's been gone for quite a while—I mean, been closed.

DD Was that it? Just one store?

KP One store. Yeah.

DD OK.

KP And the first place I can remember is the Satellite Café. And people named Alloways run that.

DD Could you spell that?

KP A-L-L-O-W-A-Y. And they had a station right next to it called the Space Station and they had kind of a space ship sign—you can see in this book here—it was open 24 hours.

DD Restaurant, gas station?

KP Restaurant and gas station. A little bitty tiny place, but they had homemade pies. I'll show you a picture. Let me find some more of these places. Right here it is.

DD Uh-huh.

KP The Space Station.

DD That's on page 75?

KP Yeah, right there.

DD And the Space Station because of the Satellite Café or—

KP Yeah, the Satellite Café. The Space Station was right next to it. And I still remember those people who worked there.

DD The Alloways?

KP Uh-huh.

DD They're dressed like characters there.

KP Yep. And then there was a place called Vesta Court. It was just up from there. And he was going there about that time.

DD Another café?

KP Yes. Although there were several there. This right here, the Skyline. We used to deliver bread there.

DD Now it looks like this is actually built out of stone. Were a lot of the houses here built out of stone at that time?

KP Yes, it was sandstone. They dug the rocks out around here. This was very popular at one time. The Skyline, there was a café there, and it burned down two years ago.

DD Oh.

KP Then we passed the Munger Moss. They are good friends of mine, the Lehman family. It was a very nice café at that time.

DD Oh, the Munger Moss sold barbecue? Is that how they started?

KP Oh yeah. Yes, it's very good. I remember that when I was small.

DD But did they always have the motel or did that come later?

KP The motel has always been there.

DD Oh, so they just went from a barbecue to taking over the--

KP --the motel. Munger Moss had a black man that barbecued for a long time. He was wonderful—it was the best barbecue you could

ever ask for.

DD That's great. Today they still are eating barbecue in this area.

KP Yeah. I wish that place was still there because that restaurant was wonderful, you know. They just had good food.

DD Uh-huh. And so we're heading west, now.

KP Yes, and we looked through Lebanon, you know. Right through Lebanon. And there used to be the Joy Motel, anyway.

DD Is there any difference between, say, the Skyline and the Joy? Were they all pretty much the same tourist court—little cabins?

KP The Joy started out where people put out tents, they rented space. And then another place in Lebanon—well, there were several at the time. There was a place—it's a house now—it was called Lenz Homotel. And that was a popular place.

DD Well, what was different about it other than the name?

KP It was just a big house—

DD Oh, it was a single house?

KP Yes, single house. And it's still a private place today. But they had rooms, and it was very ornate.

DD When you say ornate, do you mean Victorian?

KP All the rooms were hand-painted and had murals.

DD Oh, do you have pictures of that?

KP Yes, it's right here.

DD The inside as well?

KP I'm not sure. I may have some pictures at home. Here it is, like it used to be. It's still there today.

DD OK.

KP And this old station right here, I remember that was there. So I remember all those places.

DD Let's see this bridge. That was a bridge for 66, it looks like.

KP Yeah, right in Lebanon.

DD And do you remember when they actually built this? Did you get to see them?

KP No, it was built in the '20s.

DD Built in the '20s, oh I'm sorry.

KP But it was still there when I was growing up.

DD Is it gone now?

KP It's gone now. It was right close to the town civic center. And then we had this station here—it was at Jefferson and Elm on 66, right here. It's gone. And here was Camp Joy. And there was the filling station, there was Lawson's filling stations, those kind.

DD Now, it says Camp Joy. Would that be for overnight tourists coming through, or is that a different clientele?

KP No, overnight tourists.

DD Were people stopping here in little resorts near the river as well? You mentioned the Eden Resort. Were there many other resorts along the river?

KP There was Eden, then there was Walkers', and then there was more probably west of Lebanon—you know—right in town too. This building right here, this station's now a liquor store. And this place is totally gone now—next door was a Dairy Queen.

DD A Dairy Queen. You're looking for page 55.

KP And this sign here, people drove into Lebanon with this sign.

DD Oh, is that there?

KP Your town, our town: it's been gone for a long time, but that was popular—people remember that.

DD What do you suppose happened to the sign?

KP We don't know. They've been hunting for that sign for years and years. And nobody can find it. And then here's another one of those stations on 66. And here's the old bus station, right here.

DD In Lebanon?

KP Yes.

DD What is it today?

KP It is Walgreens.

DD No...it's right on that corner?

KP Yeah, right on that corner...it's been torn down. And they had good food, and I was talking to a lady, and she was telling me that when she worked there they had a place in the back where the blacks sat. Can you believe that?

DD Until...?

KP They wouldn't serve them food, probably up until 1950, blacks were still eating in the special room. They couldn't eat with the white people.

DD So are any of these buildings...? It looks like the post office could still be there.

KP Yeah, it's downtown.

DD Is it still the post office?

KP Yes, it's still the post office.

DD OK. And how about the Chevy Garage?

KP That's gone, that's gone. Around here they have not restored anything really...they tore down everything. I hate to say that, but

they have.

DD And what about the Alamo Club?

KP It's gone now. The school took it over and tore it down.

DD When you think about the major commercial architecture in Lebanon from that period that is still left, what buildings come to mind?

KP Oh, boy. Well, we got an old jail, the original jail in Lebanon is still there. Very few places on old 66 are still here in town, did you know that?

DD I don't. Jefferson is...Elm is 66, were there other alignments or is it Elm all the way through Lebanon?

KP It's Elm, that's old 66. They call it East Elm and West Elm now.

DD And how was, say, you've turned to a page here in your book that shows people standing by a Route 66 sign. How is, say, Lebanon different from Waynesville?

KP Well, Lebanon is a lot bigger than...Waynesville is kinda...it used to be kinda progressive but not any more. It's moved to the Saint Robert's area, closer to Fort Leonard Wood. Fort Leonard Wood is real close to Waynesville. 32 miles.

DD What do you mean by progressive?

KP Well, Fort Wood—folks down there mostly work at Fort Wood, there's no businesses hardly in Waynesville anymore.

DD But little Courthouse Square...?

KP Yes, it's still there. So it's a landmark, anyway.

DD But were the same kind of people in the same kind of industry in both places?

KP There used to be more little shops down Waynesville. They don't have much industry down there, like we have here. Of course, we got plants, we got Detroit Tool, and Copeland, manufacturing plants. And they don't have them.

DD What do they manufacture? I'm talking about during the 66 days, that we're talking about here.

KP OK, we had a furniture factory here at that time. We had an independent stave mill.

DD What's that?

KP Where they do stave boards...like whiskey barrels. They did that there. And then we had the bus station, that was a very popular place. And my aunt worked there in the 1950s, 1960s.

DD Wow. Is she still with us?

KP Yep, she's in Texas now, right across the place that always was a café [the Ozark Café] and I remember they used to have what's called broasted chicken, that was their special there.

DD Uh-huh. You know, sometimes people make a distinction between tourists and travelers. The traveler just wants a place to spend the night and move on but the tourist might want to spend a couple of days and see the local sights. Did you have both of those here?

KP Not really. Mostly just people stopping for the night, gassing up, getting something to eat. That's what it was for many years.

DD But there seems to be so many of these river resorts that those would be more like the tourists.

KP Yes, and that's what's picking up today. I remember when the park just had a few old cabins. And this is a place called 66—it was popular at one time. The Streetcar Grille. [I am not sure about this. It doesn't sound quite right.]

DD It was a streetcar?

KP Yeah, it was a streetcar and they made a grill out of it.

DD Lovely.

KP It was gone about 1960. Talking to a friend the other night. He's a year older than I am. He said he had eaten there. I never had. Their special was tame rabbit.

DD Tame rabbit?

KP Tame rabbit.

DD As opposed to wild rabbit?

KP Yeah, tame rabbit.

DD And was tame rabbit better because, maybe a little fatter than the...?

KP Yes. Yes. And here's this Lenz Homotel, again. It's a real nice building, it was.

DD Big.

KP Yeah. This couple, they lived there in this house, and they didn't cook meals, they just had the rooms.

DD Uh-huh. Now on this bridge, the four-lane South Jefferson bridge, opened in '57—do you remember this bridge?

KP Sure do.

DD You must have been already a little grown by that time. No, you would still be very young.

KP I still remember like it was yesterday anyway.

DD Do you remember the first time you went across it?

KP No, I don't [laughing]

DD What was that connecting? What part of town was that connecting?

KP Jefferson. Jefferson and Five there.

DD Why was it a four-lane? Did 66 need that much traffic, four lanes?

KP It did in later years. When they first started, this was a real small bridge. But they built it up.

DD Is this bridge still around?

KP No, it's gone now.

DD What happens to these bridges?

KP They've had to replace them. We had three original bridges. A truck went through one of them. And down at Shepard Hills, they did a new one last year. The other one was getting real bad, so they replaced it. So they're all new. They would tear down the old, you know.

DD Yeah. Is the Sinclair place still there?

KP It's gone too. I remember when it was there. And here's the site of another business row. It's a Ford garage there now. I really enjoyed working on this book because I remember so much, you know.

DD There's Bishop Furniture...that's the one...

KP Yeah, one of the first ones...

DD Not on 66. Were there any manufacturing going on on 66?

KP Yeah, there was Detroit Tool Engineering.

DD Detroit Tool Engineering?

KP Yes, yes. And it's still there. There's the old Caldwells—it's a truck stop. I remember eating there with my dad. And here's Nelson Hotel. They tore it down in '58. They built a Consumer's Market there. That's a grocery store. [Now Smitty's Market is there.]

DD OK. I'll visit it.

KP Yeah, they've got a grocery store right there now. And this building's still there. A mobile gas station was on the right in Lebanon.

DD What is it today?

KP A check cashing loan place or something like that. But it's out, now. There's a place right here--

DD The Buick Garage.

KP It's chrome paint and glass. Now, it's a very ornate building.

DD Chrome paint...?

KP Chrome paint and glass.

DD The Jefferson Hotel, was that on 66?

KP No. It was right on Jefferson. We have a lot of businesses in this book here; it's gone now. It's a bank now, a bank parking lot. This is the Dream Village, and that's quite a place. It's been gone since the early '70s.

DD Tell me about it. It looks like it's got a little fountain or a pool there?

KP It had a a fountain right there.

DD And it was a hotel?

KP It was a little motel, little cottages, see.

DD Stone cottages?

KP Yeah, little stone cottages.

DD And is that a fountain in front?

KP That's a big fountain in front. It lit up at night.

DD Oh. But it was just basically a tourist court?

KP It was a tourist court. I got a second cousin—she'll be married 50 years next year—and she said her and her husband spent their honeymoon in that cabin there.

DD And they call it Dream Village just because...?

KP This guy that built it had a dream. And that's how this came about—he had a dream about this village. Then he had it built anyway.

DD Are there any signs of that left?

KP No, there's nothing. Country Kitchen is there now in the parking lot [laughing]. There's some more of the little cabins, anyway.

DD It looks like quite a little place there. What was the name of Mr. Nelson, do you remember?

KP Frank Nelson.

DD And he built it all himself?

KP Yes. His dad built the Nelson Hotel, which was right across from the Dream Village.

DD And Bergner-Bownan-Mattleanc—what did they make?

KP It was a lumber yard right down on Jefferson right from 66. It's gone now. It's the feed mill now. Here's something still there. The Horseshoe Pond.

DD Is that right here in town?

KP Yes. You know where Dowd's catfish is. It's right past it on the left.

DD On the left?

KP Yeah. It's still there.

DD Well, I'll have to visit it.

KP Yeah. Horseshoe Pond.

DD Horseshoe Pond.

DD Why were people stopping here so much in Lebanon? Was there some natural feature that made it likely that they would stop in Lebanon and not Rolla or Waynesville or anything like that?

KP Well, they stopped at those places too. But right here, this is a crossroads. You've got Highway 5, which is a major highway, going both directions. You've got 64 going out here. See what I mean? 66 was a crossroads where people came through a lot.

Here's a place towards West Lebanon—the McClarys—it's still there...part of it is. I remember eating there when I was small. And old Caffeyville—it's right in the middle of I-44 now.

DD Oh, it went right through the town?

KP Yes. All the buildings were destroyed anyway.

DD Was there some feeling that that wasn't a good idea when the highway came in?

KP Oh, there was a lot of opposition to that, like everything.

DD Tell me a little more about that. I've even heard a story one time that some small towns in central Missouri—I always thought it was around Carthage—actually had their city council pass a resolution against the freeway and wrote a letter to the federal government saying they were going to sue them if they took Route 66 away. Does that sound like the sort of sentiment that you would've found here?

KP Yes. Well, inside town they were happy to have Route 66. You know what I mean? That brought a lot of people, sure did. But like when they were building I-44, well, a lot of people lost their homes and farms were tore up and there was the old Hazelgreen church that had to be moved. The people in this town were unhappy about that.

DD What about Caffeyville? Were they happy about it?

KP Well, yes and no I think. It was getting older, those people were. And there were some other places here. This old place has been gone here—Albert Carlson's store. The Bungalow Inn—I knew the lady that had that—she's dead now. Those stores and a lot of those people that knew 66...I've done feature articles on tons of people.

DD Tell me how one could find those pieces? Do you have a clipping file for them?

KP Yes, I do at home in the boxes. I got a museum almost myself. I've done a story about Izola Henson, and I've interviewed a lot of people who worked on old 66, helped build that. And like I said, they're gone now. Here's the old stagecoach stop. It was on 66.

DD Really? The Butterfield Stagecoach Stop? Near Phillipsburg?

KP Yes. It was on 66.

DD Do you know if the stagecoach stop followed 66's route in other places, or just here?

KP I think just here.

DD Where did it go? Was it north or south of here? Was it a north-south route or an east-west route?

KP East-west.

DD And what was their path roughly?

KP I'm not really sure. But it went through here. Kind of what's called the Old Wire Road—you've heard of that?

DD Yes. And did you have that here as well?

KP Yes.

DD From St. Louis, I think it came out of.

KP Yes.

DD And where did that road terminate?

KP Around Joplin somewhere.

DD Was that the route of 66?

KP That was the old Trail of Tears. You've heard of the Trail of Tears. That was it.

DD OK, so what I'm hearing from you is the confluence of the original Trail of Tears in the early 19th century to the wire road--

KP Yes, and that's a Civil War road--

DD A Civil War road. And then also Route 66 following through in the same direction.

KP Yes, definitely.

DD And the Butterfield may or may not have overlapped in the middle of that crossroads? OK, I guess we can find more information about the Butterfield Stage route. That's fascinating. Now here's a picture of Jerry Kavale. Did you know Jerry? He's a little before you.

KP No, I know some of the family.

DD How did the races get along on 66? You don't find a lot of discussion of African-Americans on Route 66. Were they traveling as well?

KP I am not sure but I really don't think they were. Because I never heard--

DD You didn't see them in the tourist courts?

KP No, no. A lot of places they couldn't stay, you know.

DD Tell me about that.

KP At a lot of places they weren't welcome.

DD Do you remember any places in particular where they weren't welcome?

KP No, I'd say a lot of them camped out along the way, did you know that?

DD Like Camp Joy or...?

KP Probably so.

DD You think they would've been accepted at Camp Joy?

KP Well, I'm not quite sure. They may or they may not. You don't ever hear of black people staying in courts, you know what I mean. I never had.

DD And what about restaurants? They would eat out back?

KP Yes, they had a special room, like at the bus station.

DD And like this family, the Kavales, were they accepted? Where could they go and work and where couldn't they go? Could they walk around downtown just like everybody else?

KP Yeah, they could walk downtown. They just couldn't eat in a lot of places. They could go in stores and everything.

DD They could shop in the stores?

KP Yes, yes.

DD But not eat in the restaurants. And were there separate restrooms at the gas station.

KP I heard there was, in some places. But probably, I bet with a lot of places, not. Because this is small around here. You know back in those days a lot of time you just had one restroom.

DD Uh-huh. Right.

KP Don't you remember that?

DD Yeah, sure. So how large was the African-American community?

KP Well, a lot bigger than it is now.

DD Now, this is not a mixed race family, is it?

KP No, no. But this little stagecoach stop, the people that started that, had a granddaughter who lived here. I interviewed her a few years back, and she's gone now.

DD Are there many black families in Lebanon from that period?

KP Not very many. They about all moved off or died.

DD Did they go to the same school?

KP For many years they had their own black school down in the area they call Old Town.

DD Old Town. Where is that? Can you describe it?

KP It is down Harwood Avenue and you'd go into St. Louis Street and Main Street back in there.

DD And is it still an African-American corridor?

KP No, you wouldn't know it is now. Just a very few black people live down there. They live in all parts of town now. It's different than what it used to be.

DD It was concentrated in those days in the Old Town district?

KP Yes, it was the old original Lebanon, and they all lived down there together. And they had a black school.

DD Do you remember the name of it?

KP W.T. Vernon School. And they closed in 1958. The teacher was Mrs. Ford, and she became the librarian at one of the elementary schools here at that time.

DD An African-American librarian?

KP Yes. She was the first black lady to teach in the public schools.

DD Wow. And is that family still here?

KP She's got a son that lives around Waynesville, around that area. He's a teacher here now.

DD And the Kavales? Are they here still?

KP No, they're gone. There's no family here at all now. Here's the place called the Overpass Café. And that's up in Phillipsburg, you can still see the building there. One of the ladies that cooked there was my grandmother's cousin. When you've lived here as long as I have, your family, you're related to a lot of people. This little building right here, you can see it just right across from the railroad bridge in Phillipsburg, on the Interstate.

DD That's west of here.

SIDE B

- KP That's west of here. That's a picture of that. And these are some other places—places around here that had souvenir things. I don't remember that. It was probably there when I was growing up. But, you know, they're just things they don't remember.
- DD Of course.
- KP Uh-huh. And this right here is a church down right on 66. It's a rock sandstone building, but that was the old one. And this has been gone a long time. And this right here, Midway, it was there a long time.
- DD The Midway Café.
- KP The Midway Café. They had little cabins too. It's been gone for, oh, maybe seven or eight years. And let me see—this is right in Phillipsburg—Route 66 used to go through there.
- DD Is that building still standing?
- KP It's still there, right in Phillipsburg.
- DD I guess because Lebanon developed more, they tore more stuff down than in some of these smaller towns.
- KP Yes, yes. Right near Phillipsburg. Them old buildings, all them are gone. This is right here in Conway. It's called the Harris Café. And I remember eating there when I was small.
- DD The home of the Little Round Pie.
- KP They had little bitty pies. I remember them. Raisin, gooseberry, all kinds. And that brought a lot of people up there, to buy these little pies.
- DD That's long gone, I imagine.
- KP Yes, it's long gone.

DD Is there still the Phillipsburg Hotel? Is that still there?

KP It's been gone a long time.

DD What is left from Phillipsburg, from--

KP That old store. That's all. This was where the bank was—there's a bank down Conway now— there's a little tourist court, it was there. We tried to get every business we could in this book. It was a lot of work trying to find photos.

DD Yes.

KP This was right in Conway. This place—here's the Midway Camp, that was right near Phillipsburg. And this is some of my family here. This is my great-grandparents, Lawrence and Grace Price in Conway.

DD Uh-huh. Did you use to go there when you were a kid?

KP No, it was long gone. This building here in Conway is still there. It was a Ford garage dealership, but now it's a Conway Senior Citizen Center. They've remodeled that.

DD Were there many Hispanics or was it basically a few blacks and everybody else was Anglo?

KP Yeah, there were no Hispanics there at that time.

DD Did you have a lot of people moving in? Did you have the sense of a lot when you were growing up in the '50s that Lebanon was growing and people were arriving and it was changing?

KP Yeah, it probably started really changing in the '60s or early '70s. Because everybody at that time knew each other in town. You might know them only partially, but you knew who they were. And now there's so many new people, you don't know people when you go to the store anymore.

DD Today?

KP Yes.

DD But let's think about that change that you were talking about in the

'60s. How did that come about? Were people coming here for military or for manufacturing or what?

KP Both, both. Because Fort Wood—a lot of people were employed down there.

DD And they would live here?

KP Yes. A lot of people drove back and forth down there.

DD That must have brought an influx of African-Americans. Did it?

KP Not too many, it seemed like. No, not very many. But Saturday was a big day in Lebanon, and people came and spent the whole day in town. I remember that too.

DD What was it like? Did you live in town, or did you come in for Saturdays?

KP We all lived on the edge of town. That wasn't no big deal.

D What was the scene in downtown like?

KP Just a small town—little shops, three dime stores which we don't have any more. And people would park at meters, and people would spend all day in town visiting each other.

DD They'd go by Harry's shoeshine store.

KP Yes, yeah.

DD Shine your shoes.

KP There were a lot of clothing stores. We don't have those places anymore.

DD That's true. And when you say visiting, are you talking about just coming in and sitting in a café, or going to each other's houses?

KP On the streets.

DD On the streets?

KP People would sit on the streets and talk in those days, I remember

that.

DD And have the schools changed in Lebanon?

KP Oh, yeah. The realm was so much bigger than when I was going.

DD Same schools?

KP There are new buildings now. Those old buildings are about gone, too.

DD When did you start noticing, as a journalist or editor, when did you start noticing the revival of interest in Route 66?

KP Probably not till the '90s, maybe. It wasn't talked about then, you know what I mean?

DD OK, so the old highway was bypassed. Do you remember what year it was bypassed around here?

KP In '58.

DD How did that affect the town?

KP Well, that's when things started disappearing.

DD The stores?

KP Cafes on that route.

DD They just shut down?

KP Yes. They started shutting down about that time. Especially the old ones that were on the old highway that was bypassed. Like Riley's and Blue Moon, and all those places. They didn't have the business anymore.

DD So come the '90s, these people come from out of town and they drive Route 66? How did you come to notice?

KP Well, there was just more publicity about it.

DD How would you notice?

KP Well, we just got more stores, some more interest, but that's when I really started realizing again. Used to, in the '70s, people didn't think about it then, you know what I mean? There was probably nothing because I had worked up there at the newspaper – I'm going on 37 years – and when I first started there, there was no talk about old 66. Nothing. In the '80s either. So it was the late '90s when people started getting interested again.

DD Do you remember the first times you met somebody who came there because it was on Route 66?

KP I can't think, sorry.

DD But you have met people like that.

KP Yeah, yes. A lot of people.

DD And are they foreign or Americans or...?

KP Most people I have met are American. A lot of people come back wanting to trace where they got married or their first-time food here.

DD And do you ever sort of chuckle that these people think Route 66 is a destination resort but it's your main street?

KP Yeah. It's different anyway because I've been here so long.

DD You probably never thought, "Oh, boy, I'm traveling Route 66."

KP No, never. Not till we got interested in it again. I feel like I know every place along the way because, when we were doing this book, we went through it so many times and tried to find the original foundations and everything.

DD Well, you're a real resource here. It seems like Cuba's gotten interested in Route 66—commissioned those murals. Why don't you tell me the story of recent times now, of how Cuba became interested in its Route 66 past? Oh, not Cuba, Lebanon.

KP Well, they want to have this Route 66 Festival, and we had that one year. They have it every year about, but it really was a big thing the first year. And they had this Route 66 Society--

DD Who organized this festival?

KP The town of Lebanon, anyway. I was on that committee. And Ramona at the Munger Moss can tell you more about that. Because she was the one who helped get this all started. She's done a lot for Route 66.

DD Do you remember the starting of the association?

KP Yes.

DD Were you one of the founding members?

KP I was here—in Lebanon, I was.

DD Tell me then a little bit about how it got started, and its very first meetings.

KP Well, Gary Sozneicki, he was the editor of that time, and me and him--

DD Could you spell that?

KP S-O-Z-N-E-I-C-K-I. And he got me on the committee, anyway. So we worked all that year getting this festival organized. We done a map and everything. And they still have it, but it's not as popular as it was that one year, because that was a big thing; and they had a play and everything.

DD And then how did the murals come about?

KP Downtown, you mean? It was some high school kids.

DD But I saw a lot of them have the same name, Don Grey. Is that who painted the murals? It looks like that's who painted the murals.

KP Mr. Alva Hazell's class painted the murals downtown.

DD And were there professional muralists brought in? Professional painters? Was it just kids who did all that? They seem a little better than just high school kids.

KP There might have been, but it was his supervision anyway.

DD I see. When did they put in those murals? '90s?

KP No. It's after 2000, I know that. About the time of this book, somewhere around there. You know, time kind of leaves me. It goes by so quick anymore.

DD And have you noticed an increase of tourists since the murals?

KP Yes. Yeah. Every year. Which is more people, too, you got to think about that, too.

DD And is that helping the town? Do you feel that Route 66 is having an economic impact?

KP Sure. Yeah, it is the shops here and the restaurants and everything. Yes.

DD What would you do if you weren't on Route 66?

KP I don't know. I don't have any idea.

DD I know, it's kind of a crazy question.

KP Like I said, I remember all these old places. I have memories of all this stuff. Like Wrink's is still there.

DD I'll have to go look for it.

KP Yeah, go look for that.

DD It's on Elm?

KP Yeah. The old 66. It'd be Seminole now. And then—let's see if there's anything else here I haven't told you about.

DD The bathing holes? Oh, it was baptizing.

KP Yeah, there was a baptizing.

DD Is that in that lake on Route 66?

KP No, this is down here at Bennett Spring.

DD Oh, OK.

KP It's kind of far away but we—like, here's the old North Star Café. My grandmother used to work there. And it's a tax office now. Red Fox was a beautiful place at one time.

DD Is it still there?

KP Yeah, but it's totally different now.

DD What kind of trucking did you have coming through?

KP Oh, they had Camel 66 Express, I remember that. I had a good friend worked there. And here's the Silent Night Tourist Camp. That's a chiropractic place. I forget what's there now.

DD It was a chiropractic place?

KP Yes. Silent Night Tourist home.

DD So that building is still there?

KP Yes, it's still there. You can see it.

DD What about this one? The Ninth --

KP That's downtown Jefferson. It's still there. That's one of the buildings we do have.

DD It's on Jefferson?

KP Yes. Jefferson. Not Jefferson, I'm sorry. Madison and Commercial. Here is the old Camel 66 Express. The old Dairy Queen, it was on 66. It's a little bitty building. It's still there, but--

DD Is there anything in it?

KP No, no, there's nothing in there now. That was a very popular place. I remember going to Dairy Queen. Everybody can remember that, you probably do too.

DD Were there any schools on 66?

KP Yes, there was. Up there in Conway, there was one called Twilight. It was a rural school, all eight grades.

DD A rural school?

KP Yeah, yes.

DD All eight grades in one building?

KP Yes. Yes. It was up there in Conway, I remember that. It's a house now.

DD How did you end up with a museum in this town, a Route 66 museum? Who put that together?

KP Well, that started with that Route 66 organization.

DD The Pikes? The Route 66 Association?

KP Laclede County. That's how that got started.

DD You must have known Jim Powell.

KP No, I don't.

DD Well, he's the guy who gave the collection--

KP I've heard of Jim Powell, but I haven't really met him.

DD And do you know who got the collection and put the museum together?

KP A lot of people here in town donated items from their past and everything. It's a collection of a lot of different people's things.

DD But who organized it?

KP Well, Cathy Dane, the librarian helped get a lot of that together. And Ramona Lehman, she—when we had the festivals, we collected pictures and other things and put it in there. That's when a lot of people donated things. When we started that. This school here was on 66, Wair School, and it's gone now.

DD W-E-I-R?

KP W-A-I-R. A lot of these places are gone. These are around 66, these schools. I remember when this store was there, Laclede County and Pulaski County Line, because my dad used to deliver bread there.

DD That's the Hazelgreen store?

KP Yes. My dad delivered bread there. I remember that very well. And it was torn down. You wouldn't know it was even there now.

DD How has Lebanon changed over the years, if you look back on it? Obviously, there are more people, but has the character changed?

KP Yes, yes. It's totally different.

DD How?

KP Well, we got just so many new people, and a lot of the old ways are gone now. A lot of the older people I knew are gone.

DD Was it more a farming community when you were growing up?

KP Yes, it was. It was a farming community for many years.

DD And secondarily, manufacturing?

KP Yes, yeah.

DD And how has that changed today? Are the farms and the manufacturing all gone?

KP We still have manufacturing. That's what keeps people here. But the farming is not like it used to be. People still live on farms, but they don't milk. Milking used to be a very big industry here. There's still a lot of cattle here and stuff like that, but people don't milk.

DD Yeah, it's kind of a bother, isn't it?

KP Yeah, people don't do it anymore.

DD And what manufacturing do you have now?

KP Well, we got Detroit Tool...

DD Spell that?

KP D-E-T-R-O-I-T Tool and Engineering. We got about three boat factories here. We lost our HD Lee Plant, jeans wear, we lost it. And we have Copeland—it's very big.

DD What do they do?

KP Scroll-compressors.

DD Scroll-compressors?

KP Yes, yes. And refrigeration engineer, electrician, and all that. And we had a place called Marathon—they build motors for refrigeration and that kind of stuff.

DD How come they haven't moved away like so many of the other places seem to do?

KP The only place we lost is HD Lee Plant with the sewing plant. They made jeans and all that, overalls. And they moved away, which was very hard. But they're about gone from everywhere.

DD Well, what do you miss most about the old Lebanon, just to wrap this up?

KP Probably the old downtown area, the old dime stores and all the shops we used to have.

DD There are still shops there.

KP There're shops, but not like it used to be.

DD How are they different?

KP Well, in the downtown we don't have any new clothing stores, hardly. Now most are secondhand clothing. We don't have no dime stores—they're gone.

DD Great. Well, I'd like to thank you very much for talking with me. Do I have your permission to transcribe this and deposit it in an archive?

KP OK.

DD I really appreciate you taking all your time. Do you collect Route 66 memorabilia?

KP A little bit. I've just a lot of everything. Yeah, I'm an antique collector and a book collector and I've got lots of photos.

DD Did you ever know a woman named Patricia Buckley?

KP No.

DD She wrote a book about Route 66 and somebody said she lived out in this part of the world. A very early book back in the '70s.

KP No, I never heard of her.

DD Yeah. Do you have old books on Route 66 that are local?

KP No. I got a load of county histories and that kind of stuff.

DD County histories? Those are very good. Is there any place around here one could buy those books? Used books.

KP I could probably find you some anyway, if you know what you're hunting for. A lot of this stuff is so out of print now, you know what I mean?

DD Yes, I do. Well, I'm just trying to amass a little collection of books on Route 66 and engineering reports, anything like that so that we can preserve them for the generations to come. But maybe it's better if you just talk with Mark and figure out a good place for what sounds like an enormous and important collection on Route 66. I'd hate to see it dispersed. Let's hope we can find a good home for it somewhere nearby. Thank you again. I'm going to turn off my recorder here.